

# HELP FOR HEARING LOSS

**By** Bette Mentz-Powell, Regional Coordinator,  
Bureau for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing



There are over 400,000 people in Wisconsin with some degree of hearing loss. Of these, the majority by far are over 65 years of age.

The numbers are large, yet some people dismiss the seriousness of hearing loss if there is some residual hearing. But any degree of loss can cause a misunderstanding of spoken language. As we age, chemical and mechanical changes in the inner ear produce a slowing down of signals traveling from the ear to the brain. Presbycusis (hearing loss in later years) manifests itself in a sensorineural hearing loss causing difficulty in understanding speech over the telephone and in following conversations in a group situation.

Hearing loss affects the entire family. It results in isolation, boredom, irritability, frustration, withdrawal, denial, anxiety, feelings of hopelessness and depression. Following are some of the symptoms that indicate a person may have a hearing loss:

- Speech deterioration
- Tendency to hog conversations
- Frequently asking people to repeat
- Inappropriate responses
- Difficulty understanding in group situations
- Turning head to one side to hear better
- Talking too loudly or too softly.

The Bureau for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (BDHH) offers a variety of free services. There is a program for anyone having trouble using the phone. The Telecommunications Assistance Program (TAP) will fund the purchase of a telephone amplifier, loud bell, signaling device to alert the person that the phone is ringing, teletypewriter or whatever equipment the individual needs to use the telephone.

Other BDHH services include information and referral, assistance, consultation, education and training. BDHH office staff can answer questions related to the latest technology for deaf and hard of hearing people, legal issues related to hearing loss, where to purchase assistive devices, what financial assistance may be available and what resources are available in your community. Contact one of the following BDHH regional offices for more information:

**Southern** for Adams, Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Dodge, Grant, Green, Iowa, Juneau, La Fayette, Richland, Rock, and Sauk counties can be reached at 3319 W Beltline Hwy, #234, Madison 53713. Tele: (608) 267-3811 voice or (608) 267-4329 TTY.

**Southeastern 1** for Jefferson, Kenosha, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha counties can be reached at 141 NW Barstow St., #157, Waukesha 53188. Tele: (262) 521-5128 voice or (262) 548-5858 TTY.

**Southeastern 2** for Milwaukee county at 2745 S. 13th St., Milwaukee 53215. Tele: (414) 902-5935 voice or (414) 902-5926 TTY.

**Northeastern** for Brown, Calumet, Door, Fond du Lac,

Green Lake, Kewaukee, Manitowoc, Marquette, Marinette, Menomonie, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, Sheboygan, Waupaca, Waushara, and Winnebago counties can be reached at 200 N. Jefferson, #311, Green Bay 54301. Tele: (920) 448-5295 voice/TTY.

**Western** for Barron, Buffalo, Burnett, Clark, Chippewa, Douglas, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, LaCrosse, Monroe, Pierce, Pepin, Polk, Rusk, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Vernon, and Washburn counties can be reached at 610 Gibson St., #1, Eau Claire 54701. Tele: (715) 836-3869 voice or (715) 836-6770 TTY.

**Northern** for Ashland, Bayfield, Florence, Forest, Iron, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Price, Sawyer, Taylor, Vilas, and Wood counties can be reached at 2801 N. 7th St., #300, Wausau 54403. Tele: (715) 842-7693 voice or (715) 842-1211 TTY.

### **COMPUTER-SAVVY SENIORS**

For the growing number of seniors who have computer access to the internet, we will print websites that may be of interest. First, our own Bureau of Aging and Long Term Care Resources: Try this website for information on aging issues, the name and address of every county and tribal aging unit in Wisconsin, statistics on Wisconsin seniors, nursing home and assisted living information: [www.dhfs.state.wi.us/aging](http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/aging).

Another good website is the Administration on Aging, a federal government agency for older Americans: [www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov). If you have a problem getting to these, for help email: [rosnefp@dhfs.state.wi.us](mailto:rosnefp@dhfs.state.wi.us).